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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2424
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 1740
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 1866
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0460
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1143
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 1500
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 1922
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4350
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RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK
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AF/S FOR S. HILL
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/24/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: ZIMBABWE ELECTION UPDATE: MAKONI A NON-STARTER

REF: A. HARARE 45

[B](#). HARARE 16

[C](#). PRETORIA 139

Classified By: Amb. James D. McGee for reasons 1.4 (d)

[1](#). (C) SUMMARY: Simba Makoni took himself out of the electoral mix on January 22 by pledging loyalty to President Mugabe. Focus has now shifted to Dumiso Dabengwa, a ZANU-PF Politburo member who has for some time opposed Mugabe within the party. Interest in Makoni and now Dabengwa results from a widespread belief that the MDC cannot defeat Mugabe on its own. END SUMMARY.

[2](#). (C) According to several Embassy sources, Simba Makoni on January 22 met with President Mugabe and assured him he would not be part of a ZANU-PF splinter group opposing Mugabe or part of a coalition with the MDC. With almost all analysts agreeing the MDC has little chance in an election against ZANU-PF and Mugabe, Makoni had been seen as a moderate ZANU-PF voice who, with the backing of Solomon Mujuru and an alliance with the MDC, could have posed an electoral threat to Mugabe. Makoni had long been seen as lacking political courage, however, and his decision to remain in ZANU-PF with Mugabe appears to confirm that perception.

[3](#). (C) The fevered speculation about Makoni in the last several weeks was the result both of a lack of confidence in the MDC and the hope that there was a leader who, perhaps in alliance with the MDC, could challenge Mugabe. The focus has now shifted to Dumiso Dabengwa (Ref A). Dabengwa is an ally of Solomon Mujuru. According to our sources, Mujuru and Dabengwa plotted a challenge to Mugabe at the ZANU-PF Congress in December. They had lined up support from six of the ten provinces and were planning to have Dabengwa's name placed in nomination. Mugabe learned of the plan and, through Emmerson Mnangagwa who was in charge of the Congress, manipulated the rules to establish a pre-set agenda with no nominations. The challenge, therefore, never took place.

¶4. (C) Sidney Masamvu of IDASA spoke with Mujuru last week in South Africa. He told us Mujuru was cool to a Makoni candidacy--Makoni had no base and he did not think he was a strong leader--but said he would be supportive of Dabengwa and had been discussing with Dabengwa a possible electoral challenge.

¶5. (C) Several MDC Tsvangirai faction members have told us they are skeptical Dabengwa would bring much to the opposition. They point to the fact that he lost his bid for a parliamentary seat in Matabeleland in 2005. Others, however, including MDC members of the Mutambara faction (Ref A) believe Dabengwa could be a potent force in conjunction with the MDC and Mujuru, helping to solidify Matabeleland and to gain votes in Mashonaland. They also note that he brings liberation credentials to the table and could partially liberate the MDC from charges that it is a tool of the West. Jonathan Moyo averred to us that Dabengwa is one of four people, along with Mnangagwa, Mujuru, and Joseph Msika whose defection would exert a shock on ZANU-PF.

¶6. (C) COMMENT: A Dabengwa-Mujuru-MDC coalition would present issues of who would lead--Dabengwa or Tsvangirai--and would Mujuru-Dabengwa followers support a largely MDC coalition (and vice versa). In the end, this may just be the flavor of the month, as with the Makoni infatuation, driven by a general feeling that the MDC cannot defeat Mugabe on its own. But for now, Dabengwa is generating considerable conversation. END COMMENT.

MCCEE